

CLAUSE STRUCTURE AND PROSE STYLE IN HEMINGWAY

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Following my 1997 article "Phrase Structure and Prose Style in Hemingway," this paper examines the tenth chapter (the mean chapter) of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (hereafter Sun) and discusses the role that clause structure plays in the author's prose style. All clauses are identified, their syntactic and informational structures analyzed, and accompanying stylistic effects studied. As with the 1997 article, a computer-assisted analysis was conducted to search for two additional syntactic constructions: coordination and subordination. This was done by searching for coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, and then the structure in which they were used were analyzed and coded. This information was later compiled into frequency lists for illustrations. But to begin with, a brief summary of the findings in my 1997 article may be helpful for readers to see how Hemingway manipulates phrases and clauses alike to achieve strong stylistic effects.

I. A Minimal Style for a Vacuous Life

Through Jake, a "brilliant observer but helpless," much like Benjy Compson in the opening paragraphs of Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury (Doody 1974: 223), Hemingway accomplishes a "minimal style that mirrors a vacuous life of a lost generation in a disordered age" (Li 1997: 411). In the tenth chapter of 4,343 words, Li identified a total of 1,051 noun phrases and found that the average words per noun phrase is only 2.48, and some 75% of them lacks descriptive elements in modification positions. Adjective phrases are sparingly used; they only take up some 4% of all the words in the chapter, and most of them connote negative meanings, such as "nervous" (94), "dim and dark" (96), "jealous" (99). Of the 423 verb phrases identified, some 80% (340) of them are simple verb phrases, namely, those consisting of a main verb only (without auxiliary verbs). In the case of adverb phrases, they take up only 0.4% of the text. Lean noun phrases, minimal verb phrases, occasional adjective phrases, and rare adverb phrases all point to a barren "inner world of a lost generation burdened by moral bankruptcy and spiritual decadence" (Li 1997: 416). How then does Hemingway craft his clauses to enhance the effects of the lean syntax in his phrases?

II. The Clause Structure, its Type and Effect

It is generally agreed that the deep structure of the English clause takes the form of subject followed by verb and then by object, complement and/or adverbial. Using S for subject, V for verb, and X for any post-verb element, the unmarked word order of an English clause then has the pattern of SVX, as are seen in the following examples:

1. S V X
- a. I / was / blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to him.¹ (Sun 90)

- c. The guard / spat / in the dust. (Sun 92)

Frequent uses of the pattern run the risk of stylistic monotony. To avoid it, writers normally vary the pattern. However, Hemingway takes it as a valuable linguistic tool to reinforce the effects already brought about by various types of lean phrases.

In counting the number of clauses and analyzing them, I relied on orthographic conventions. Any string of words that begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop was identified as a clause because “sentences don’t exist” and “definitions of the sentence . . . just won’t stand up to linguistic scrutiny--they aren’t useful as a descriptive model” (Wright and Hope 1996: 93). As a result, some identified clauses in the sample are in fact reduced forms of clauses or clause fragments, as are shown in (2):

- 2a. "Good. You remember it, Jake. Fifty pesetas." (Sun 95)
b. "Too hot. By the way, I got the bus tickets." (Sun 100)

There are five clauses in (2): (2a) alone has three and (2b) two. Given their recoverability, these elliptical clauses are indeed clauses, which have the underlying structure of SVX. There are 20 such instances (4.7%) out of a total of 427 clauses in my sample. Table 1 below presents twelve types of clause structure and their frequencies that I identified:

3. Table 1: Clause Types and their Frequencies in the Tenth Chapter of Sun

Type	SVX and its Reduced Forms								Other Forms				Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Structure	SVX	SVX ₂	SVX ₃	SVX ₄	SVX ₅	SV	VX	X	XSVX	XSV	XVSX	XVS	
Number	240	33	8	2	2	4	12	20	44	44	8	12	
Total (%)	321 (75%)								108 (25%)				429
													100%

(where \underline{VX}_2 , \underline{VX}_3 , \underline{VX}_4 stand for patterns of two, three, or four coordinated VX's.) Some corresponding examples follow:

- 4a. The SVX structure and its reduced forms:

- 3) S V X V X V X
He / rubbed / his chin with his thumb, looked / at it, and started / scraping again. (Sun 101)

- [illegible]

- 9) X S V X
In the morning / it / was / bright, and . . . (Sun 90)
- 10) X S V
Why I felt that impulse to devil him / I / do not know. (Sun 99)
- 11) X V S X
There / was / a general store and inn / on each side of the line. (Sun 92)
- 12) X V S
"Oh, no," / said / Bill. (Sun 100)

Responding to the close match (75%) between deep and surface structures, Mark Honegger, a participant at the 1998 Mid-America Linguistics Conference, raised an interesting point: the high match that leads to stylistic directness and simplicity is characteristic of children's literature, a point reminiscent of Traugott and Pratt's similar claim that "examples of

passages . . . where there is very little difference between deep and surface structures are hard to find except in stories for small children" (1980: 168). Curious, I randomly selected two children's books--Walt Disney's Pooh's New Clothes and Dr. Seuss' The Foot Book. Below are the findings, given respectively in Tables 2 and 3:

5. Table 2: Clause Types and their Frequencies in Pooh's New Clothes

Type	SVX and its Reduced Forms								Other Forms				Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Structure	SVX	SVX ₂	SVX ₃	SVX ₄	SVX ₅	SV	VX	X	XSVX	XSV	XVXSX	XVS	
Number	68	1	0	0	0	0	2	5	23	16	5	53	173
Total (%)	76 (44%)								97 (56%)				100%

6. Table 3: Clause Types and their Frequencies in The Foot Book

Type	SVX and its Reduced Forms								Other Forms				Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Structure	SVX	SVX ₂	SVX ₃	SVX ₄	SVX ₅	SV	VX	X	XSVX	XSV	XVXSX	XVS	
Number	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	6
Total (%)	0 (0%)								6 (100%)				100%

Much to my surprise, the percentage of the deep-surface structure match in Pooh's New Clothes is as low as 44%, and that in The Foot Book 0%, sharply contrasted to Hemingway's soaring 75%. The Foot Book consists of numerous isolated noun phrases without punctuation marks, which poses difficulties for clause categorization, so I did not include them in Table 3. However, it does contain six single-clause sentences--such as "Up feet, down feet, here come clown feet" and "In the house and on the street, how many, many feet you meet," all of which contain fronted X elements at the clause-initial position and all of which exhibit a style of indirectness and complexity and are thus vastly different from Hemingway's, even though it is a little book for beginning beginners. Pooh's New Clothes shows a near balance of the SVX structure (44%) and the structure in which X elements are fronted (56%). As such, its overall style tends to be neutralized, hence unmarked. Marked are The Foot Book and Sun, with styles that are statistically skew and polarized. The former contains clauses all with fronted X elements while the latter contains clauses 75% of which follow the pattern of SVX. Consequently, the style in stories for children seems subject to individual writers but not categorically to the very genre. One might argue that the stylistic markedness in The Foot Book may perhaps be triggered by the demand of rhyme. What then has triggered the markedness in Sun? One reasonable answer seems that Hemingway aimed at depicting an aimless, boring post-war life of a lost generation that can best be reflected by a highly controlled, dull clause style.

This stylistic effect is made even stronger by a close to invariable information structure. Within clauses, given information tends to come first, and new information to hang over. Despite the multi-interpretations of the terms of "given" and "new" among discourse analysts (Chafe 1976; Halliday 1967; Prince 1981, among others), given information in general refers to entities that have already been imparted from previous clauses, or to things readers can take for granted while new information is assumed not to be in any way known to the reader of a written

text. Examples in (7) below show the given/new dichotomy and its correspondence to SVX elements

- 7a. S V X S V X
Montoya / came up / to our table. He / had / a telegram in his hand. (Sun 99)
 given new given new
- b. S V X S V
Cohn / had been / rather nervous ever since we had met at Bayonne. He / did not know /
 given new given
- X S V X
whether we knew Brett had been with him at San Sebastian, and it / made / him rather
 new given new
- awkward. (Sun 94-95)

According to Wright and Hope (1996: 166):

S elements tend to be given information, the X elements new. A further tendency is for given (S) elements to be small, and new (X) to be large because if something has already been mentioned it can be represented economically by a short noun phrase (for example a pronoun). With new information, however, we want as much information as possible--so noun phrases in new slots tend to be expanded with modification.

This means that X elements (not necessarily always noun phrases) which are new and larger tend to reappear in the following clause as the S elements that are given and small, hence forming a chain structure that gives texts coherence and cohesion. On the other hand, however, frequent uses of this regular pattern lead to monotony that many writers avoid. However, Hemingway embraces it. His S-elements are typically short, and his X-elements elaborate:

- 8a.
- | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | X | V | S | S | V | X |
| | There / are / two dining-rooms in the Montoya. One / is / up-stairs on the second floor and | | | | | |
| | | | S | V | | X |
| | looks out on the square. The other / is / down one floor below the level of the square and / | | | | | |
| | V | | | X | | |
| | has / a door that opens on the back street that the bulls pass along when they run through the | | | | | |
| | | | X | | | |
| | Streets early in the morning on their way to the ring. (<u>Sun</u> 94) | | | | | |
- b.
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| S | V | X |
| We / waited / till everybody had gone through and out of the station and gotten into buses, | | |

X

or taken cabs, or were walking with their friends or relatives through the dark into the town. (Sun 98)

Occasionally by fronting X elements to clause-initial positions, Hemingway allows Jake a breathing spell from under the pressure of an incompetent life that puts a strong stranglehold on the heroes in the novel. This occurs only when Jake is imparting his rush of enthusiasm to his momentarily happy topographical descriptions:

- 9a. X S V X X S
- For a while / the country / was / much as it had been; then, climbing all the time, we /
- V X X S V
- crossed / the top of a Col, the road winding back and forth on itself, and then / it / was /
- X
- really Spain. (Sun 93)

- X S V X X V S
- b. After a while / we / came / out of the mountains, and / there / were / trees / along both
- X X V S
- sides of the road. . . and / off on the left / was / a hill with an old castle, with buildings
- S
- close around it and a field of grain going right up to the walls and shifting in the wind.
- (Sun 93)

To avoid diminishing the calculated effect of his monotonous information structure, Hemingway seldom allows heavy pre-verbal elements. There are, in fact, only two occurrences that show an expanded S slot:

- 10a. X S
- Just then / an old man with long, sunburned hair and beard, and clothes that looked as
- V X
- though they were made of gunny sacking, / came / striding up to the bridge. (Sun 92)
- S V X
- b. The back of the collar and the upper part of the shoulders / were / gray with dust. (Sun 96)

The expanded subjects do give the impression of a punctilious, meticulous, powerful observer. Unfortunately, they are of no avail to depict Jake as a hopeful character, being far outnumbered by the seldom varied information structure.

III. Polysyndeton and its Effect

Stylists have observed Hemingway's frequent use of coordination. For example, J. F. Kobler (1985: 112) points out that "Hemingway's reputation is that of a man who wrote short sentences with a great deal of coordination." My research tends to corroborate this statement, as can be seen from Tables 4 and 5 respectively.

11. Table 4: The Frequencies of Coordinate Conjunctions in Chapter Ten of Sun

	Type	Token	Percentage
	and	477	93.2%
	but	14	2.7%
	so	11	2.1%
	or	7	1.4%
	yet	2	0.4%
	nor	1	0.2%
	for	0	0.0%
Total	7	512	100.0%

The extraordinarily high frequency of 'and' may be accounted for by two facts. First, 'and' is semantically less constrained than other six coordinate conjunctions are in that it is not subject to the requirement of negatives of various kinds while others are. Second, Hemingway clearly uses 'and' to its extreme; on an average he uses it once every 8.5 words. By contrast, he uses subordination sparingly: once every 70 words. Of all the subordinate conjunctions, he uses only twenty-one of them for as low as 62 times:

12. Table 5: The Frequencies of Subordinate Conjunctions in Chapter Ten of Sun

	Type	Token	Percentage
	Contrast (1)	as though (1)	1.6%
	Cause (2)	because (1), as (1)	3.2%
	Choice (2)	whether (1), than (1)	3.2%
	Condition (6)	if (6)	9.7%
	Time (20)	since (1), while (2), when (8) until (1), till (1), after (1), as (6)	32.3%
	Complementizer (20)	that (11), why (1), what (1), how (1), where (2), if (4)	32.3%
	Relative pron./adv. (11)	that (9), where (2)	17.7%
Total	7	62	100.0%

Other subordinate conjunctions were not found. Consequently, it seems safe to say that Hemingway favors coordination much more than subordination and that we are essentially commenting on how Hemingway uses 'and' when we discuss how he uses coordination. Table 6 on the next page records how Hemingway uses 'and' on major levels of syntactic constituents.

As Table 6 shows, Hemingway conjoins clauses most frequently (51.8%), verb phrases next most frequently (27.9%), adjective phrases the third most frequently (11.2%), and noun

13. Table 6: The Frequencies of NPs, APS, VPs, and Clauses Conjoined by 'and' in the Descriptive-Narrative Passages in Chapter Ten of Sun

Type	Total	Coordinated	Percentage
NP	671	13	1.9%
AP	170	19	11.2%
VP	423	118	27.9%
Clause	342	177	51.8%

phrases least frequently (1.9%). It is clear then that the stylistic effects of Hemingway's coordination have to do primarily with juxtaposed verb phrases and clauses, as are represented by the examples in (14) and (15) respectively.

14. Juxtaposed Verb Phrases:

- They [only opened one bag] and [took the passports in] and [looked at them].² (Sun 92)
- We [sat in the Iruna for a while] and [had coffee] and [then took a little walk out to the bull-ring and across the field and under the trees at the edge of the cliff] and [looked down at the river in the dark], and I turned in early. (Sun 99)

15. Juxtaposed Clauses:

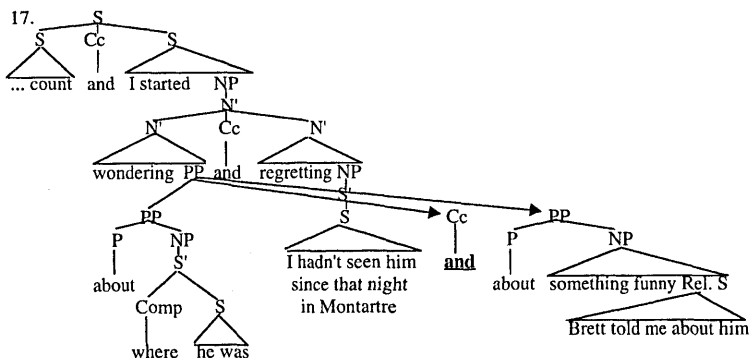
- [There was a crowd of kids watching the car], and [the square was hot], and [the trees were green], and [the flags hung on their staffs], and [it was good to get out of the sun and under the shade of the arcade that runs all the way around the square]. (Sun 94).

Hemingway favors the optional transformation to reduce subject noun phrases such as in (14a and b), thus helping create a terse style. Conversely, he tends to bore readers by presenting them lists after lists of juxtaposed verb phrases that make his text sound dry and skinny. This effect is multiplied to the limit when he juxtaposes over half of his clauses, along with sequences of syndetic coordination of constituents of various kinds. For example, when Jake and Bill and Robert first arrived in Pamplona, waiting for Mike and Brett's arrival, the narrator grew "unforgivingly jealous" of Robert's affairs with Brett Ashley, a promiscuous titled English lady, as well as Robert's "spell of superiority" and "pleasure to be able to talk with the understanding that I knew there was something between him and Brett" (Sun 98-101). So when Robert went over and over again to the barber-shop in town, which was closed at the time, to get a shave before Brett saw him, Jake quickly developed much "impulse to devil him" (99). With such sentiment and jealousy, the narrator went for an aimless stroll in the town and saw a cathedral and went inside. Here begins his rather long and tedious narrative. In it, I coded every coordinate conjunction with a subscript to mean that a particular coordinate conjunction juxtaposes either noun phrases_{NP}, verb phrases_{VP}, adjective phrases_{AP}, prepositional phrases_{PP}, gerund phrases without a genitive determiner_N, clauses_S, or S-bars_S, and so on.

16. It was dim **and_{AP}** dark **and_S** the pillars went high up, **and_S** there were people praying, **and_S** it smelt of incense, **and_S** there were some wonderful big windows. I knelt **and_{VP}** started to pray **and_{VP}** prayed for everybody I thought of, Brett **and_{NP}** Mike **and_{NP}** Bill **and_{NP}** Robert Cohn **and_{NP}** myself, **and_{NP}** all the bull-fighters, separately for the ones I liked, **and_{AdvP}** lumping all the rest, then I prayed for myself again, **and_S** while I was praying for myself I found I was getting sleepy,

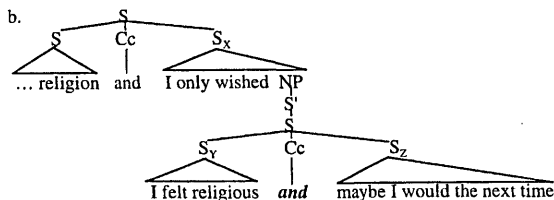
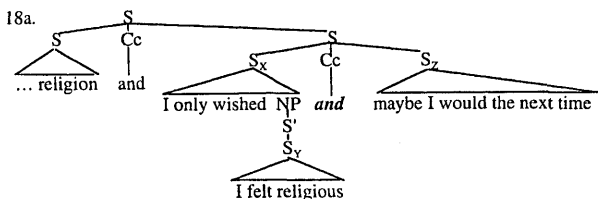
so_S I prayed that the bullfights would be good, and_S that it would be a fine fiesta, and_S that we would get some fishing. I wondered if there was anything else I might pray for, and_S I thought I would like to have some money, so_S I prayed that I would make a lot of money, and_S then I started to think how I would make it, and_S thinking of making money reminded me of the count, and_S I started wondering about where he was, and_N regretting I hadn't seen him since that night in Montmartre, and_{PP} about something funny Brett told me about him, and_S as all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me, and_{VP} was thinking of myself as praying, I was a little ashamed, and_{VP} regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic, but_{VP} realized there was nothing I could do about it, at least for a while, and_{AdvP} maybe never, but_S that anyway it was a grand religion, and_S I only wished I felt religious and_S maybe I would the next time; and_S then I was out in the hot sun on the steps of the cathedral, and_S the forefingers and_{NP} the thumb of my right hand were still damp, and_S I felt them dry in the sun. The sunlight was hot and_{AP} hard, and_S I crossed over beside some buildings, and_{VP} walked back along side-streets to the hotel. (Sun 96-97)

Similar to the opaque style often felt in Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, this four-sentence narrative has 328 words, with each sentence averaging 82 words long, sharply opposed to the average 12 words per sentence in the whole chapter, thus making this passage stylistically unique. Gone here is his usually terse, lucid style. What we see instead are primarily the multi-layered coordination contributing to a highly marked style hinting at a narrator whose life is idle, whose experience achromatic, and whose grammar limited. Deliberately, Hemingway created a construction violating the "No Crossing Branches Constraint," which says: "If one node X [in a tree diagram] precedes another node Y, then X and all descendants of X must precede Y and all descendants of Y (A is a descendant of B iff A is dominated by B)" (Radford 1988: 121). Examine the abbreviated tree diagram in (17)³ (where S stands for 'a clause,' Cc for 'a coordinate conjunction,' N' for 'a gerund phrase without a determiner,' and Rel. S for 'a relative clause'):



That the narrator is more than just a person unfamiliar with the cathedral is made clear by the ill-formed grammar--this hints at a psychological problem of a man manqué, rather than simple puzzlement. In fact, the narrator was rendered impotent in the war and has now to endure his girl friend's (i.e., Brett's) dissipated sexuality with randy men.

This stylistic effect is further intensified by a syntactic ambiguity. Examine the two abbreviated trees below. Does the italicized *and* conjoin S_x and S_z , as in (18a), or S_y and S_z on a lower level, as in (18b)?



This calculated ambiguity indicates that as the narrator prays, he is disoriented, unable to make sense of what he prays, just able to record it as a series of unrelated ideas and feelings, and of rapidly changing and woven actions, which mimics the flickering flow of mentality. Each new thought seems to impose itself on the prayer's consciousness. Essentially, the passage becomes a soliloquy, disorienting the reader and smacking of the stream-of-consciousness style often seen in William Faulkner and his like. Consequently, a cruel reality is pictured: Jake, a mouthpiece of a lost generation, of which Hemingway himself is also a part, is not only impotent but also disoriented. Much like Krebs in "Soldier's Home," Jake is incapable of praying soberly, thinking logically, and loving humanly.

NOTES

¹ We could further break down the X element into SVX structure if we wanted, since it contains a subordinate clause. However, because it is infrequent for Hemingway to use subordination in the X position, or in other positions, too, I chose to ignore it in this aspect of my analysis.

² The adverb *only* invites ambiguous readings in that it may modify the first VP, or the first two VPs, or all of the three VPs.

³ Radford (1997: 449) treats a gerund phrase as a V-bar c-commanded by the node DP (determiner phrase). Since what's pertinent to the point under discussion is Jake's violation of the No Crossing Branches Constraint, I am not following Radford's more up-to-date treatment of the gerund phrase.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article has benefited from the comments of Mark Honegger, a participant at the Mid-America Linguistics Conference (1998), that prompted me to examine the clause structure in children's literature.

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